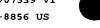
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CLAIMS

We claim:

A scalable computer system for distributed collaborative computing, the system comprising:

5 a plurality of server computers connected to a plurality of client computers via a global-area computer network;

> a high-speed direct connection link connecting the plurality of server computers; and

> a computer program executable by the server computers, wherein the computer program comprises computer instructions for:

> > receiving a request to join an on-line conference from a client computer;

selecting one of the server computers based on processing loads of the server computers;

establishing a connection between the client computer and the server computer over the global-area network; and

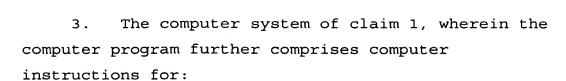
establishing a communication link between the selected server computer and one of the other server computers over a highspeed direct connection link.

2. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

sharing an application program executed on 30 one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

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viewing a document stored on one of the

client computers on an arbitrary number of other
client computers.

- 4. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:
 - detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and resuming the on-line conference.

5. The computer system of claim 1, further comprising a database, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

25 6. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.

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A method of operating a distributed 7. collaborative computing system comprising a plurality of server computers, the method comprising:

receiving a request to join an on-line conference from a client computer;

selecting one of the server computers based on processing loads of the server computers;

establishing a connection between the client computer and the server computer over the globalarea network; and

establishing a communication link between the selected server computer and one of the other server computers over a high-speed direct connection link.

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The method claim 7, further comprising: 8. sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

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9. The method of claim 7, further comprising: viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

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The method of claim 7, further comprising: 10. detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and

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resuming the on-line conference.

- 11. The method of claim 7, wherein the distributed collaborative computing system further comprises a database and the method further comprises: storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.
- 12. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

 ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.
 - 13. A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer program executable by a plurality of server computers, the computer program comprising computer instructions for:

receiving a request to join an on-line conference from a client computer;

selecting one of the server computers based on processing loads of the server computers;

establishing a connection between the client computer and the server computer over the global-area network; and

establishing a communication link between the selected server computer and one of the other server computers over a high-speed direct connection link.

14. The computer-readable storage medium of claim30 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

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sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

5 15. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

> viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and resuming the on-line conference.

The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, further comprising a database, wherein the computer 25 program further comprises computer instructions for:

> storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

The computer-readable storage medium of claim 18. 30 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:



ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.